

22 April 1982

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Herbert E. Meyer

SUBJECT: Can the Soviet Union "Stand Down"?

1. Stopping the Soviet arms build-up--or at least slowing its momentum--is a key goal of the US. Either of two factors, or a combination of both, could bring some success in the coming years: a genuine arms-limitation agreement, or a unilateral decision by the Russians as part of a strategy to cope with mounting economic problems.

2. Given the nature and structure of the Soviet system, there is reason to believe that any effort to cut defense spending would be inherently more difficult in that country than in the US. Indeed, it is an irony of planned economies that while the power to order resource shifts is immense, the system's lack of flexibility tends to frustrate effective response. General Bill Odom--one of the few scholars who has written explicitly on this subject--argues that because of the Soviet five-year planning cycle, even with the best of intentions by Moscow, "two or three five-year plan periods would be required for a significant change in the Soviet points on the guns-versus-butter curve."

3. An assessment of the Soviet system's capacity to shift resources from the military sector would be of immense value to US policymakers. It would enable them to judge where pressure on the Russians would be useful, how much pressure should be applied, and the practical limits of a Soviet response.

4. Among the questions our assessment would grapple with are these:

a. How would a shift of resources away from the Soviet military sector actually be managed?

b. What practical problems--e.g., employment--would such a resource shift entail?

c. What are the realistic parameters of any such shift?

d. How long would it take, given the best of Soviet intentions?

e. How would such a shift alter the US-Soviet relationship?

5. I've talked with [ ] and it turns out that he himself has been giving some thought to the issue. In fact, it is [ ] who tipped me off to Bill Odom's articles. [ ] calculates that an assessment could be completed within several weeks, assuming that SOVA can provide some horsepower and assuming an outside consultant [ ] can be made available.

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